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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE YEAR 1951.

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE YEAR
1951.

TO THE CHAIRMAN and MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to present to
you my Annual Report upon the Health and Sanitation of your district
for the year 1951.

The civil population of the district is 13,512 and the estimated number of inhabited houses 3964. The Rateable Value of the district is £67,499, and the sum of £275 is represented by a penny rate.

Vital Statistics.

The vital statistics for this district will not be received from the Registrar General for several months so to avoid delay in presenting the rest of this report, they will be issued when available as an appendix to the report.

Health Services.

The steam disinfecter at the Williton & District Hospital for the Aged Sick is used when steam disinfection of bedding is required after a case of infectious disease, and the Taunton Isolation Hospital is available for isolating infectious persons. Although the giving up of the Tivington Isolation Hospital was looked upon at the time as a retrogressive action I am very pleased to report upon the help and assistance given at all times by the Taunton Isolation Hospital to your Council.

Notifiable Diseases.

Infectious Disease.

Cases Notified.

Small Pox.....	Nil		
Scarlet Fever.....	"		
Diphtheria.....	"		
Enteric Fever.....	"		
Measles.....	261		
Whooping Cough.....	33		
Puerperal Pyrexia.....	Nil		
Ophthalmia Neonatorum.....	"		
Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis.....	"		
Dysentery.....	"		
Malaria.....	"		
Pneumonia.....	"		
Acute Poliomyelitis.....	"		
Encephalitis Lethargica.....	"		
Chicken Pox.....	"		
Erysipelas.....	"		
	<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
Tuberculosis (Respiratory).....	5	6	11
" (Non-Respiratory).....	Nil	Nil	Nil
Food Poisoning.....		Nil	

During the year there was an epidemic of Measles, but apart from this the district has been very free of notifiable infectious diseases. In particular I would like to stress the absence of Diphtheria in this district for a number of years due to the immunisation of the children in the early years of their life. I am pleased to say there are now very few children in this area who are not protected in this way.

I would also like to stress the importance of vaccination against Small Pox,owing to the speed at which people can reach this country, bringing infection from all parts of the world.

General Health in the District.

The general health of the population in your district during the year has been good, but I am of the opinion that the manual workers are suffering from a general loss of energy owing to the lack of meat in their diet. Men cannot be expected to produce the same amount of work on lettuce sandwiches as they can on beef steak.

Housing.

The provision of new houses is still receiving priority but, as the housing shortage gradually decreases, it will become possible to pay more attention to the repair and, where necessary, demolition of existing unfit houses.

During the year Statutory Notices have been served on owners to repair two cottages. Eight notices of "time and place" were served on owners of empty, unfit houses giving them the opportunity of submitting proposals to repair their houses if they wished to avoid having to demolish them and, as a result, two houses are being made fit for habitation, three owners have agreed not to relet their houses until they are made fit and one house is being demolished. With the exception of connections to the water main, which cannot be completed until the main has been extended, two cottages have been repaired to comply with statutory notices served last year. Five other houses have also been made fit for habitation and repairs and improvements have been made to another sixteen.

The total number of applicants at present on the waiting list for Council Houses is 445 but of these only 142 have applied for houses let in the past twelve months. When a check can be made, it will probably be found that many of the remaining 296 no longer require rehousing. In the table below, these figures have been split into three groups, i.e., families with no separate house; families already occupying a house on their own but who need to change (e.g. to a better or larger house); and families in Category V (unfit) houses.

	(A).	(B)	(C)
	Families with no separate house.	Families needing a different house.	Families occupying unfit house.
Number of Applicants during 1951.	72	48	29
Number who have not applied since 1950.	100	159	37
Total :-	172	207	66

When the occupiers of unfit houses have been rehoused, action - as already described - is taken to see that the houses are not re-occupied unless they are made fit for habitation, but this will only deal with a very small proportion of the 464 houses which were classified in the Housing Survey as being unfit.

Many of the applicants in Col.B need a better house rather than a new one and housing repair and improvement will serve them as well as and sometimes better than, the building of new houses. For the present, however, it is important to concentrate building labour on the provision of new houses and also, with the present high cost of repairs and very low fixed rents, it is often hard to say whether or not a particular house is repairable at a reasonable cost. This makes it difficult to get extensive repairs done to most houses while they are occupied, and

it is only when they can be sold with vacant possession that the necessary repairs are carried out. Since 1946 approximately 36 cottages of under £12 rateable value which were previously let to working class families have been bought up and repaired and occupied by the new owners, who are often retired persons.

No application for grants for conversions or reconditioning of houses under the Housing Act, 1949 have been received this year.

Water Supplies.

In February a survey was begun of privately owned supplies in parishes likely to be served by the proposed Clatworthy scheme. Information on the number of houses served and the type, adequacy and purity of supplies in the parishes of Clatworthy, Brompton Ralph, Elworthy, Stogumber, Crowcombe, Bicknoller, Sampford Brett, Monksilver, Nettlecombe and Williton has, with one or two exceptions, been completed. The parishes of West Quantoxhead, Old Cleeve, Carhampton and Withycombe remain to be surveyed.

The S.A.E.C.'s Water Supplies Officer is also making a survey of requirements for agricultural purposes and will supply complementary information which, when added to our findings, should give a fairly detailed picture of the water requirements of the area.

Samples for bacteriological examination have been taken from nearly all of these supplies and on receipt of a bad report the owner has been advised on improving the supply - if improvement appeared practicable - and further samples taken. Generally, the purity of private supplies so far tested has been rather better than expected. Most of the really bad samples were from wells, and in many cases it is impracticable to do much to improve the supply especially when, as is often the case, the well is in close proximity to a farmyard.

Last year the District Auditor asked for the water charges to consumers of Council-owned supplies to be checked and brought up to date. This work was incorporated in the survey so that they could be done together, but the survey of private supplies has been temporarily suspended so that an attempt can be made to clear up the water charges by the end of the financial year. A permanent register of water consumers is being compiled so that in future the water charges can be more fully recorded and adjusted from year to year.

Routine chemical and bacteriological samples have been taken of all the larger piped supplies. The purity of these supplies has generally been fairly good, but Leighland supply had some bad reports due to the flooding of the collecting chamber. This was put right by the Engineer and Surveyor's Department and the supply is now much better. As a result of the work done in cleaning up the collecting area, uniformly good samples have been obtained from Monksilver supply this year. Of the four unsatisfactory reports on chlorinated samples, two were from the Washford and Roadwater supply, one from Hawkcombe and one from Williton. In neither case were the reports very bad compared with untreated supplies but they were not good enough for a chlorinated water. Reports on samples of spring water taken from Williton pumping station before chlorination have varied from "Excellent" to "Gross Contamination", and the purity of this supply depends very much on its chlorination.

Results of water samples from Piped Supplies :-

		<u>Satisfactory.</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory.</u>
Bacterio- logical.	(Untreated supplies.	114	18
	(Chlorinated "	10	4
Chemical.	(Untreated supplies.	25	-
	(Chlorinated "	3	-

Extensions to the Council's mains have been made at Wootton Courtney where the 3" Porlock road extension and the extension to "Timbercroft" on the Ramscombe road have been completed. After prolonged negotiation with the Minehead U.D.C., permission was given

for the owners of four houses at Ellicombe to take supplies from the Minehead main. This work has now been done.

The only shortages of water this year were caused by leakage from the Luckwell Bridge supply and breakdown of the Cutcombe supply pump.

Particulars of piped Public Supplies :-

Parish.	Direct to Houses.		From Standpipes.	
	Houses.	Estimated population.	Houses.	Estimated population.
Bicknoller.	54	176	-	-
Brompton Ralph.	-	-	-	-
Carhampton.	141	458	-	-
Clatworthy.	-	-	-	-
Crowcombe.	70	228	4	13
Cutcombe.	79	257	-	-
Dunster.	237	770	-	-
East Quantoxhead.	39	127	-	-
Elworthy.	-	-	-	-
Holford.	85	276	-	-
Kilve.	69	225	-	-
Luccombe.	30	98	-	-
Luxborough.	-	-	-	-
Minehead Without.	18	59	-	-
Monksilver.	23	77	-	-
Nettlecombe.	-	-	-	-
Oare.	-	-	-	-
Old Cleeve.	348	1132	-	-
Porlock.	429	1394	-	-
Sampford Brett.	70	228	-	-
Selworthy.	161	523	-	-
Stogumber.	120	390	15	49
Stogursey.	274	891	-	-
Stringston.	46	149	-	-
Timberscombe.	113	367	-	-
Treborough.	-	-	-	-
West Quantoxhead.	65	212	-	-
Williton.	430	1600	-	-
Withycombe.	75	245	-	-
Wootton Courtney.	68	221	-	-
Total:-	3044	10103	19	62

Drainage & Sewage Disposal.

Only private drainage work and local sewer extensions to housing sites have been carried out during the year.

Plans for Williton sewer connection to the Doniford sea outfall are being considered by the Ministry of Local Government and plans for Washford and Roadwater sewerage schemes are being prepared.

Improvements are also urgently needed to the sewers and disposal works of several other villages, particularly Blue Anchor where the sea outfall is defective. Sewage is discharged above low water mark and the incoming tide washes faeces and other sewage solids on to the beach, endangering the health of many people, especially children, who use the beach in Summer.

Inspections of private drains are made from time to time to obtain the information required by official searches. These searches are sent in by the purchaser's solicitors when property is changing hands, and after the Dunster Castle Estate sale approximately 89 drainage systems had to be inspected for this purpose.

Refuse Collection & Disposal.

Refuse collection is being carried out under contract by British Road Services; one vehicle and two men being employed practically full time. The refuse is taken to the Council's tips at Bossington, Dunster, Woolston and Strington. One full time attendant is employed by the Council to trim Dunster and Bossington tips and to burn as much combustible material as possible in the Dunster incinerator. These tips are now fairly well in hand, though more covering material is needed at Bossington. Williton and Strington tips only receive occasional trimming by the Council's workmen and are not in such good condition, but no nuisance is being caused.

Enforcement of the provision of dustbins has had to be discontinued owing to steel and galvanised iron shortages. The larger villages have now been dealt with and enforcement is being restricted to individual cases where exceptionally unsuitable receptacles, such as tea chests, are being used to hold refuse.

Food Supplies.

Meat supplies for this district are distributed from the central slaughterhouse, at Minehead, and meat inspection is carried out by the staff of the Public Health Department while the Minehead Inspector is on holiday. This year inspection was carried out for an additional three weeks after the Minehead Inspector left the district, until a temporary inspector was appointed.

The necessity for ice-cream manufacturers to provide recording thermometers and to take very great care in manufacture to comply with the Ice-cream (Heat Treatment) Regulations has caused locally made ice-cream to almost disappear from this district. Consumption of ice-cream still appears to be increasing as most of the former manufacturers are now selling mass-produced ice-cream and five new retailers have been registered, making a total of 38 registered retailers at present operating. Two samples have been taken from a local manufacturer. Sampling of mass-produced ice-cream has been restricted to occasional tests of the various brands, taken, where possible, from retailers who obtain bulk supplies and sell ice-cream unwrapped. All samples were satisfactory.

Milk samples have been satisfactory, except for one batch taken in the summer.

Camping.

There are seven licenced camping sites in the district with accommodation for 422 caravans and tents. Of these, approximately 360 are permanently on the sites, leaving very little accommodation for mobile caravanners.

Shortage of suitable camping sites has led to indiscriminate camping throughout the district during the summer months. The Council has this matter under consideration and it is anticipated that early in 1952 a meeting of all interested authorities will be arranged.

Gypsies have now made Woolston Moor a permanent camping site. Such occupation cannot continue for an indefinite period without seriously fouling the whole area, and at one time it was in a filthy state. In view of the Bicknoller Parish Council's failure to obtain vacation of the site by enforcing local Bye-laws, the District Council did not consider action against the gypsies for camping without a licence would be effective, so statutory notices were served on them requiring them to abate the nuisance they had caused. This resulted in some families leaving and the others cleaned up the site to a certain extent.

Rodent Control.

The Council's operative, Mr. H. Chidgey, has treated private and business premises, a few farms and the Council's refuse tips and sewers during the year. The S.A.E.C.'s Pest Officer has treated farms which are under contract with him and private firms have contracts with other farmers, but these only deal with 126 of the approximately 360 farms in the district. It is now the Council's responsibility under

The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act, 1949, to see that rats are controlled on farms as well as on private premises and, unless many more farmers make proper arrangements to have their rats destroyed, an additional rodent operative will be needed if the Council are to carry out their duties properly. At present the Council's operative is shared with the Bridgwater R.D.C., and only spends alternate fortnights in this district; he can only deal with complaints and the sewer treatments required by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and has no time for inspection and treatment of farms.

Rats must be controlled, not only because they eat food needed for human or animal consumption, but also because they carry a number of infectious diseases such as Weils disease, an epidemic of which has recently broken out in Dorset. They are also thought to be carriers of foot and mouth disease.

Rats need both food and hiding places; if these are removed, very few rats will be found on the premises. The ratproofing of stores is usually not very difficult or expensive compared with the cost of killing rats after they have done the damage, and is the logical way of dealing with this pest. Removal of hiding places by standing boxes or sacks a foot or so away from walls so that rats cannot run along behind them in darkness, standing chicken houses 9" off the ground, and so on, is most effective in discouraging rats and so reducing infestation.

Summary of Inspections & Treatments carried out :-

Type of Property.	Properties inspected.	Properties treated.
Local Authority.	4	4
Dwelling Houses.	581	520
Business Premises.	25	10
Agricultural Property.	31	7
Total :-	641	541

Factories Act.

This year a start has been made on checking the Factory Inspector's list against the Council's register and bringing both up to date. There are only one or two premises in the district which would be considered as "factories" in the usual sense of the word; the others are premises such as garages, bakeries and smithies where only one or two persons are employed. One garage has been provided with sanitary accommodation on service of an informal notice and action has yet to be taken to have unsuitable sanitary accommodation put right in another.

Summary of Inspections made by The Council's Public Health Department.

Housing Acts.

Houses Inspected.....	124
Informal Notices Served.....	13
Statutory Notices " (of Time & Place for consideration of Unfit Houses)...	8
" " " (Demolition Order).....	1
" " " (to Repair Unfit Houses).....	2

Public Health Acts.

Inspections of Drainage & Sewerage.....	51
" " Water Supplies.....	45
" " Refuse Disposal.....	94
" " Camp Sites.....	49
" " Flthy or Verminous Premises.....	2
" " Nuisances.....	21
" " Public Conveniences.....	8
Miscellaneous Inspections.....	13
Informal Notices Served (Miscellaneous).....	22
" " (to Provide Dustbins).....	13
Statutory " " (" ").....	16

Public Health Acts. (Cont'd).

Disinfections.....	15
Disinfestations.....	3

Food & Drugs Act.

Inspections of Food & Catering Premises.....	32
" " Knackers Yards.....	2
Informal Notices served.....	6
Number of Water Samples taken.(Bacteriological).....	382
" " " " " (Cheemical).....	37
" " Ice Cream samples taken.....	12
" " Milk samples taken.....	12

Food Condemned.	lbs.	ozs.
Fresh & Preserved Meat.....	103	8
Tinned Meat. (1 case & 21 tins).....	297	14
Cereal (Oatmeal).....	171	-
Poultry (Chicken).....	30	-
Meat Products.....	29	tins
Vegetables.....	28	"
Fruit.....	98	"
Fish.....	4	"
Soup.....	9	"
Milk.....	8	"
Cheese.....	2	small boxes.

Factories Act.

Inspections of Factories with Mechanical Power.....	14
" " " without " " 	2
" " other Premises (e.g. Building Operations).....	2
Number of Defects found.....	2
" " " remedied.....	1

Complaints.

Number of Complaints received.....	136
" " " investigated.....	136

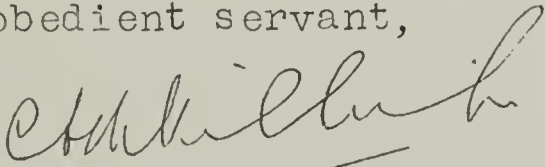
Public Health Administration.

The Public Health Staff consists of Mr.R.B.Perrett,Chief Sanitary Inspector and Mr.A.F.M.Howard,Additional Sanitary Inspector,both of whom hold the Sanitary Inspector's Certificates of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

Mr.R.J.Ashman is Clerk to the Department.

I am,Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,



M.B.,Ch.B.,

Medical Officer of Health.

